

**Minutes**  
**Public Service and Trust Commission**  
**Pro Bono Committee**  
**Communication Subcommittee**  
**March 17, 2011**

The Subcommittee on Communication held a meeting on March 17, 2011 at the Law Offices of Robinson & Cole, 280 Trumbull Street, 28<sup>th</sup> Floor, Hartford, CT.

Those in attendance: Attorney Jan Chiaretto (chair), Attorney Alfred Casella and Attorney Dwight Merriam.

1. Attorney Chiaretto called the meeting to order at 3:10p.m.
2. Attorney Chiaretto welcomed the other members of the subcommittee.
3. The subcommittee reviewed their charge and had a lengthy discussion regarding the nexus between the need for pro bono attorneys and the ability of a larger pool of attorneys who are properly trained to perform pro bono work.
4. The subcommittee agreed that part of their charge was to make recommendations regarding marketing and communicating the need for pro bono attorneys, as well as identifying resources for attorneys who were interested in performing pro bono work, but who lacked the necessary skills. The subcommittee discussed how many attorneys have a lot of experience in a limited area, but lacked sufficient training to represent clients in areas such as housing or family. As a result, one of the goals of the subcommittee is to utilize attorneys who have expertise in a certain area and create a network whereby the area of expertise becomes accessible to other attorneys, and the senior, more experienced attorneys can become mentors to younger, less experienced attorneys.

For example, the subcommittee had a lengthy discussion regarding the need for experienced and competently trained attorneys in the area of Probate law. Often times, young or inexperienced attorneys are assigned cases in Probate Court where they are acting as Conservators for individuals who may not be competent and are therefore unable to make sound decisions for themselves. As Probate issues are different from other civil matters, the subcommittee agreed that there is a need for a training program in the Probate arena so that attorneys can adequately represented a client without exposing themselves to potential malpractice.

5. The subcommittee discussed the specific components that make up the overall communication charge. Specifically, the issue of marketing pro bono programs was discussed and the importance of using marketing to communicate the need for pro bono attorneys. In addition, the importance of networking was discussed as a key element of communicating with potential pro bono attorneys. The subcommittee agreed that a data base of resources should be created and made available to attorneys who are looking for training and/or mentoring in a particular area. Lastly, the subcommittee discussed the importance of utilizing technology as a communication tool. Through the creation of a website, a resource list which provides names of attorneys with expertise in a specific area can be made available to all attorneys. The subcommittee cautioned, however, that the creation of a resource list should include a mechanism through which conflicts

are thoroughly checked so as to avoid any potential risk to the attorney or firm who may represent or has represented a related or adverse party.

Additionally, the subcommittee discussed the possibility of utilizing streaming video or audio as training devices for new and/or inexperienced attorneys who needed training in a particular area. These videos could be posted on the website in tandem with the resource list.

The subcommittee discussed effective vehicles for communicating with a large pool of attorneys. Specifically, the issue of reaching out to the Connecticut Bar Association sections and committees was discussed. The subcommittee further discussed the idea of preparing a concept paper for submission to the chairs of the sections and committees and utilizing them for input and outreach.

Several other ideas for outreach to attorneys were discussed including mailing newly admitted attorneys information about the importance and need for pro bono work, and including a question on the annual attorney registration which asks attorneys if they were interested in receiving information about pro bono opportunities. Regarding the latter, a discussion was held as to whether it was more effective for attorneys to “opt in” or “opt out” of the request to receive pro bono information.

Related to the earlier discussion on marketing pro bono programs to attorneys, the subcommittee discussed the possibility of securing the volunteer services of a public relations firm to assist in the development of an effective marketing/communication campaign. The subcommittee agreed that a positive public relations campaign could not only assist in expanding the numbers of attorneys who were trained and willing to perform pro bono work, but, on a broader scale, could help to improve the overall perception of attorneys and the practice of law.

6. The next meeting of the Communication subcommittee will be held on April 20, 2011 at 3:00p.m. at the Law Offices of Robinson & Cole.
7. The meeting was adjourned at 4:15 p.m.